

Chapter 10

Avifauna of the Kwamalasamutu region, Suriname

Brian J. O'Shea and Serano Ramcharan

SUMMARY

The RAP team recorded 327 species of birds: 294 species from the three RAP sites, 12 species observed in the area during the reconnaissance trip (3–8 May 2010) but not during the RAP survey, and 21 species observed only in the vicinity of Kwamalasamutu itself. The avifauna was typical of lowland forests of the Guiana Shield, and included many species endemic to the region. Our observations represent the first published records for Suriname of *Crypturellus brevirostris* (Rusty Tinamou), *Dromococcyx pavoninus* (Pavonine Cuckoo), *Xiphocolaptes promeropyrhynchus* (Strong-billed Woodcreeper), and *Ramphotrigon megacephalum* (Large-headed Flatbill). The overall species list was highest for the Sipaliwini camp (250 species), followed by Werehpai (221 species) and Kutari (216 species). 153 species, or approximately 52% of those encountered at the three sites, were observed at all sites. The Kutari site had the most distinctive avifauna of the three sites. We estimate that a minimum of 350 bird species, or roughly half of the number of species known to occur in Suriname, may be found in the Kwamalasamutu area. Although no species listed on the IUCN Red List were encountered during the RAP survey, at least one (*Harpia harpyja*, Harpy Eagle, Near-Threatened) is known to occur in the area. Maintenance of large tracts of intact forest is recommended to preserve the avian diversity of the Kwamalasamutu region.

INTRODUCTION

Birds are excellent indicators for rapid biological assessments—they are primarily diurnal, they are generally easy to detect and identify, and the richness of bird communities tends to correlate positively with other measures of biodiversity. Birds are important food sources for other animals and people, and healthy populations of large-bodied frugivores and predators are indicative of a relatively intact, undisturbed ecosystem. Since many species are conspicuous when they are common, it is comparatively easy to assess their population status, even within the constraints of a rapid inventory.

In contrast to many other taxonomic groups, the avifauna of Suriname is well known (Ottema et al. 2009), though new records for the country continue to accumulate as more interior localities are inventoried (O'Shea 2005; Zyskowski et al. 2011). Most of the interior of Suriname is covered by unbroken tropical moist forest and is sparsely populated. Accordingly, the avifauna is diverse, and many sites support healthy populations of species that are of global conservation concern, such as large raptors, cracids, and parrots.

The Kwamalasamutu region encompasses the eastern portion of the upper Corantijn drainage in the southwest corner of Suriname. It is one of the most remote lowland regions of the Guiana Shield; much of the human population is concentrated in Kwamalasamutu itself, with human presence elsewhere limited to occasional hunting and fishing parties, or small groups of people traveling between communities along the major rivers. The region's vast forest matrix continues unbroken far into Brazil and Guyana, and is similarly isolated from